



Olympia Report

Jim Honeyford

Serving all of Klickitat and Skamania counties, South Yakima county and southeast Clark county



State Senator • 15th District

FEBRUARY 2009

As we finish out the fourth full week of this legislative session, there have been a number of major bills moving through the legislative process, including many bills which I have sponsored.

Cap-and-tax scheme would lead to higher utility bills and fewer jobs

As the ranking Republican on the Senate Environment, Water and Energy Committee, one of the main issues I have been working to oppose is **Senate Bill 5735**, which would set up a regional cap and trade – or what I call a cap-and-tax – scheme to cut green house gases.

In my 15 years in the Legislature, this is probably the biggest piece of legislation I have ever seen. Its impact on you and your family would be enormous. Unfortunately, a lot of the key questions regarding how the program will be run and how much it will cost the taxpayers have either been left unanswered or delegated to the Department of Ecology. This bill is bad for electricity consumers, bad for workers and disastrous for our overall economy.

Under cap-and-tax, the cost of electricity, natural gas, fuel – and any product made or transported in Washington will skyrocket.

Considering our state soon could be facing a deficit of \$7 billion or more and jobs are already fleeing Washington, now is especially not the time for expensive, job-killing environmental plans that have never been proven to reduce energy costs or protect the environment. I will continue to work for common-sense energy and environmental policies and oppose proposals that put your jobs at risk.

Senate approves “belt tightening bill”

Calling **Senate Bill 5460** a “good step in the right direction,” Senate Republicans supported the passage of this measure, which would reduce spending by an estimated \$105 million in the last six months of the 2007-09 biennium. However, it falls short of what needs to be done to address the \$600 million deficit in the current two-year budget cycle. Without spending reductions that go well beyond this legislation, the state’s new rainy-day fund may need to be tapped before we even get around to adopting a budget for 2009-11. SB 5460 freezes salaries for state managers; bans most official state-paid travel; prohibits equipment purchases for more than \$1,000; and re-institutes the state hiring freeze for most jobs (the freeze declared by the governor last fall was lifted in early January). *SB 5460 passed unanimously and is now before the House of Representatives for consideration.*

Senate Republican proposal would limit government spending to projected revenues

Faced with a \$6 billion deficit that easily could grow to \$7.5 billion when the next state revenue forecast is released in March, Senate Republicans are taking the lead to prevent this kind of fiscal crisis in the future. In addition to a constitutional amendment to save exceptional revenue when the economy is strong (Senate Joint Resolution 8209), we are also proposing a constitutional amendment that would limit spending to projected revenues. Senate Joint Resolution 8210, which I am co-sponsoring, would prohibit the Legislature from adopting an operating budget that exceeds the revenue and reserves in the state general fund and related funds. Spending has increased by 33 percent since 2005, which was two and one-half times more than revenue projections. SJR 8210 would go to voters if approved by a two-thirds majority vote of the Legislature. *The proposal has been referred to the Senate Ways and Means Committee.*

Senate Republican Assistant Floor Leader

Committee assignments:

- Environment, Water & Energy, Ranking Member
- Labor, Commerce & Consumer Protection
- Ways & Means

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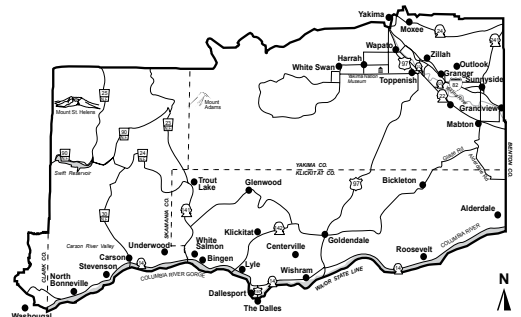
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15th District

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Senate Bill 5446 amounts to a “gag order” on employers

In an attempt to prevent employers from talking to employees about labor/management issues in the workplace – something the U.S. Supreme Court has already decided that states cannot regulate – a bill has been introduced that would even prevent employers from mentioning Santa Claus.

Senate Bill 5446 would limit or stop all communication and/or activities related to legislation, elected officials, candidates, religious holidays (including parties) or charity drives. Employees would be able to sue employers that violate the provisions of this act. *SB 5446 received a public hearing on Feb. 3 in the Senate Labor, Commerce and Consumer Protection Committee.*

Senate Republican bill would reduce health care cost for school districts

The state Public Employees Benefits Board (PEBB) can purchase health care plans for large pools of employees at a considerable savings. Currently, school employees bargain with their districts for health care benefits. Local levy dollars are used for these benefits. **Senate Bill 5491** would require school districts and educational service districts to purchase health benefit plans from the PEBB after current employee contracts expire. State government would save as well because adding such a large group to the pool would decrease

the overall per-employee cost. *SB 5491 is scheduled for a public hearing in the Senate Committee on Health & Long-Term Care at 8 a.m. on Wednesday, Feb. 11.*

Bill would protect property owners from government land grabs

The Washington State Constitution specifically forbids government entities from taking private property for another private use, but recent court decisions have found flimsy and abusive ways to get around this prohibition. Since it is up to courts to define “public use,” **Senate Bill 5664**, which I am sponsoring, would restrict the powers of eminent domain to uses that protect public health and safety or provide public facilities such as streets, lighting systems for roadways, water systems, storm and sanitary service systems, parks and schools. *SB 5664 has been referred to the Senate Judiciary Committee.*

Attorney general warns of bogus Internet employment offers

Unemployed workers are being targeted by scam artists over the Internet with e-mails that promise job opportunities. These e-mails contain links to viruses or phishing sites. Attorney General Rob McKenna said as more people are looking for work, scammers are looking for them – he calls the situation “despicable.” Some of the e-mails may look quite legitimate. For more information, visit the Attorney General’s Web site at: <http://www.atg.wa.gov/pressrelease.aspx?id=21852>.

Please use this space for any comments, suggestions or problems you would like me to know about.
Or call the toll-free legislative hotline at 1-800-562-6000.



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